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C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 002288

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (GARBLED TEXT)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/28/2017  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [GR](#) [MK](#) [NATO](#)  
SUBJECT: MACEDONIA NAME DISPUTE AND NATO ACCESSION: GREEK  
RESPONSE

REF: A. STATE 160890

[1](#)B. ATHENS 2199

Classified By: Charge Tom Countryman. Reason: 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY AND COMMENT: On November 29, Charge delivered ref A points to MFA SecGen Agathocles. Agathocles's response was frank: in his view, the U.S. failed to appreciate Greece's concerns. The GOG was not bluffing; the name issue must be resolved before the 2008 Bucharest Summit, or there would be no NATO entry for Skopje. Agathocles rejected the idea of direct talks with Skopje on cultural heritage and other issues prior to resolution of the name issue via the Nimetz process. COMMENT: We had already previewed these points with Agathocles; his reaction today was equally firm though more controlled. Ambassador will raise the issue in his introductory call with FM Bakoyannis on December 3; we expect the FM will take an equally firm line. Agathocles had few specifics to offer on the Nimetz visit next week, a sign that the GOG is in listening mode -- with no new message to offer. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) On November 29, Charge delivered ref A points to MFA Secretary General Agathocles (FM Bakoyannis was in Madrid). Charge noted that we had already previewed many of these points informally (ref B). Now, with UN mediator Nimetz's visit to the region scheduled for December 3 - 5, we had been instructed to raise the issue officially in Athens and Skopje to restate the USG position. Charge emphasized that the U.S. had made no decision on Macedonia's candidacy yet. Our decision would be based on Macedonia's fulfillment of NATO requirements, including its progress on key reform issues. It is our expectation that the 1995 Interim Agreement will continue to be respected, and that Macedonia's candidacy will be judged solely on its merits. The United States was not seeking an invitation using Macedonia's constitutional name, a point we are making with other NATO allies. Charge underscored that dialogue was essential -- both within the Nimetz process and in parallel. For that reason, we urged both sides to open channels of bilateral dialogue on cultural and other issues.

[1](#)3. (C) Agathocles was concerned: was this a dialogue of the deaf? The U.S. failed to appreciate Greece's concerns about regional stability. Unless the name issue was resolved before Bucharest, stability in the region could deteriorate. The name was not a joke; Skopje was using it to plan, long-term, for a revision of borders at Greece's expense. Greece was not bluffing; there would be no NATO entry for Skopje unless the name issue was resolved. Frankly, because NATO is a military alliance, the question of Macedonia's membership was even more serious than it was for the EU.

Agathocles argued that, unless the Nimetz process brought results before Bucharest, Greek-Macedonian relations would start to resemble Greek-Turkish relations "in the old days."

¶4. (C) Agathocles also questioned the utility of direct talks; there was an international process under Nimetz. That was the only vehicle for progress, and we should not give Skopje the impression that they did not have to cooperate. Charge countered that our message to Skopje was also to take the Nimetz process seriously. But we sincerely believed that Nimetz had a better chance of ultimate success if the two sides were expanding their dialogue on all issues. Agathocles stated that the GOM was using the name issue to build its popularity -- as well as harboring irredentist ambitions against Greece. Charge pointed out that this was the reason why direct dialogue between the two governments on the issues behind the name dispute -- cultural patrimony and education -- was essential.

¶5. (C) Agathocles was blunt: the GOG did not trust Skopje. Greece's good intentions were clear, and the proof lay in 12 years of economic investment by Greek firms there. Greece would not open a bilateral discussion until and unless the name issue -- the spearhead of the relationship -- was resolved within the Nimetz framework. Agathocles admitted he did not know what to expect from Nimetz's upcoming visit; the GOG was prepared to listen. Above all, it wanted to clear up the name issue, leaving no grey areas behind.  
COUNTRYMAN